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Memorandum

CHINESE COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES IN LATIN AMERICA

30 April 1965

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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No. 1110/65

30 April 1965

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
MEMORANDUM

SUMMARY

Communist China's official presence in Latin America is still very small, but Peiping is working to increase and strengthen ties with its supporters, and the hemisphere has become a Sino-Soviet battleground of major importance. Peiping's exhortations to a head-on revolutionary struggle strike a sympathetic chord among dissident activist elements eager to wrest power from the Moscow-oriented Old Guard leadership which dominates Latin American Communist parties.

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Chinese Communist Activities
In Latin America

1. The Chinese Communists view Latin America primarily as a Sino-Soviet battleground and most of their current activity is tied in with Peiping's steadily worsening conflict with Moscow. Propaganda beamed to the area calling for the "liberation" of Latin America supports long-range plans for fomenting widespread chaos and revolution. Like Peiping's modest subversive efforts, however, it appears designed primarily as encouragement for opposition to Moscow-oriented leadership among the rank and file of local Communist parties. The Chinese are also reliably reported to be actively working to compete with the Cubans for the allegiance of some militant Latin American revolutionary groups.

2. Although the leadership in most Latin American Communist parties staunchly supports the Soviets, there are divisions in Communist ranks almost everywhere. There are splits between the cautious and the impetuous, between the Old Guard in control and younger men hungry for power. Peiping's exhortations to head-on struggle strike a sympathetic chord in some impatient splinter groups. They quote Peiping and Havana against their opponents in intraparty struggles, and the violence of the Sino-Soviet polemic over strategy lends respectability to their local heresies.

3. Chinese Communist propaganda is flooding Latin America in ever-increasing volume. Peiping broadcasts more than thirty-five hours a week in Spanish and Portuguese, trumpeting its identity of interests with the "masses" and the applicability of Chinese Communist revolutionary experience to the local scene. This is backed up by a few indigenous propagandists, recruited as stringers for the official New China News Agency (NCNA), who distribute Spanish language editions of glossy Chinese magazines and ideological journals.

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6. Revolutionary take-over undoubtedly figures in Peiping's ambitions but as yet the Chinese Communists have not been able to secure satisfactory bases from which to operate. Working at a great distance and with limited resources, Peiping has thus far had little success in establishing an official presence in Latin America. While a great many dissident leaders have traveled to Communist China, Chinese personnel have had relatively limited access to Latin America.

7. The Chinese Communist Embassy in Havana--established in September 1960--remains Peiping's only diplomatic mission in the hemisphere. Aside from its bureau in Cuba, NCNA has Chinese officers only in Mexico and Chile. Elsewhere it is represented by stringers recruited locally. Except for Mexico and Chile, Chinese Communist attempts to use trade ties as a lever to establish permanent representation have thus far failed.

8. Communist China trades with only a handful of Latin American countries. Last year Peiping bought grain in Argentina worth about \$100 million and made purchases of grain and cotton in Mexico amounting to about \$35 million. Deals for Chilean copper and nitrates during 1964 came to approximately \$4.5 million, including contracts for delivery in 1965. Over-all trade with Cuba totaled less than \$200 million.

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